



NUHW NEWS AND VIEWS

Dominican Hospital

DECEMBER 2021



STEWARD SPOTLIGHT ANNIE STEPKA

The past year has been a grind for Annie Stepka and her co-workers at Dominican Hospital. They've had to deal with an influx of patients and the worst health crisis in a generation.

To deal with the extra stress, the lead occupational therapist takes to the road.

She's an avid bike rider who tries to ride her bicycle to work at least twice a week — a 20-mile round trip. She picked up the hobby before college and even did a 10-day bike tour in Italy in 2010, traveling from Rome to Florence

Though she also plays the mandolin and enjoys going for 20-mile hikes, cycling is her primary interest.

"My favorite thing is riding a bike," said Annie. "It helps clear my head. I like the feeling of

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homecare  homebaseSM

NEW SOFTWARE, NEW PROBLEMS

In September, Dominican Hospital implemented a new software system for its home health members. Homecare Homebase has a big learning curve and workers are having difficulty adjusting to it.

Many NUHE members felt they were not being supported by management and they were spending a lot of their time trying to figure out the system. Members complained the direct support from management was inefficient.

On October 13, NUHW members met with Dominican Hospital to discuss issues regarding the new software, particularly its impacts on patient care.

Management brought several of their corporate members and everyone who was in charge of overseeing the rollout of Homecare Homebase.

The labor-management meeting was very productive. A lot of questions were answered but there are still some lingering issues. We've scheduled another meeting for November 15 at 3 p.m. to further discuss the launch of the new software.

NUHW MEMBERS TACKLE UNDERSTAFFING

NUHW members have been meeting with Dominican Hospital management since the summer to resolve understaffing issues at the facility, particularly two vacancies for occupational therapists that we were concerned would go unfulfilled.

On an October 13 call, management released their staffing analysis showing they were using per diems for a .8 position with occupational therapists.

We're analyzing the staffing analysis to review the data as we continue to see occupational and physical therapists quitting due to understaffing.



PTO AND COVID-19 BOOSTERS

NUHW members and Dominican Hospital management have reached an agreement that if workers have adverse reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine booster, we will use time from our extended sick leave to cover stay home and recover.

To use extended sick leave, notify the timecard manager to make sure they do not draw from your paid time off (PTO) or your regular sick leave.



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TUITION REIMBURSEMENT ELIGIBILITY

If we want to further our education, our contract can help with that effort.

Section 21 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement deals with Tuition Reimbursement/ Continued Education Time.

According to the contract, the Employer will reimburse tuition for up to \$3,000 per fiscal year

to employees who have completed six months of continuous employment, covering registration, lab fees, books and other related fees, but excluding late fees, parking, transcript and admission fees, among others.

Workers must apply in advance in writing specifying the course they wish to attend and obtain approval to attend.

Courses submitted for reimbursement must be taken on non-work time and cover college courses and certification programs which are job related or related to future promotional opportunities with the hospital. Exam preparation courses are also eligible as long as this leads to credit for the approved course.

Employees must submit a request for reimbursement within 90 days of the course completion on the required form and attach receipts, the course syllabus and proof of course completion

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STEWARD SPOTLIGHT ANNIE STEPKA

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covering long distances under my own power. It makes me feel strong.”

While cycling is a source of renewal and vitality in her personal life, at work Annie draws strength from the union she and her coworkers formed in 2018. She played a central role in the organizing effort and has been a steward ever since.

“Being in a union was new to us and I really wanted to help in the transition because I was invested in it,” she said.

“People think being in a union is about being confrontational, but it’s not,” Annie said. “Most managers want to work with you. The union creates an opportunity to even the playing field in communication and negotiation. There’s an avenue to solve problems where there wasn’t before.”

But in the end, it comes down to workers banding together for a shared goal and using their collective strength to improve conditions for both workers and patients. Stewards are there to help channel and organize that energy.

“The more people who step up to be stewards, the better for our power and our strength to advocate for each other,” she said.

